

Heritage – 14 Years on the Heritage Trail

By Ian Anderson



14 Years on the Heritage Trail The third week of September 2018 marked the fourteenth anniversary of the founding of Ipoh World Sdn Bhd (ipohWorld), but the occasion passed by without even a whisper. There were no fireworks, celebration dinners or long speeches. Indeed it was as if Ipoh’s, education-based, Heritage Company did not exist. This was not unexpected as, despite providing support to students worldwide, assisting authors and documentary makers, providing outstandingly successful free exhibitions and building a world-beating museum, it is true to say that many Ipoh people have never heard of ipohWorld. Is this surprising? Absolutely not, as it is very obvious that real heritage enthusiasts in Malaysia are few and far between, although many claim that role. To them we would say “Action speaks louder than words”.

The seeds of ipohWorld were sown, over a glass of beer, in the FMS Bar when a Star reporter asked a group of Expats what they thought about Ipoh. Inevitably the subject of heritage cropped up and the newspaper article printed one Expat’s concern about Ipoh’s appalling lack of

interest in local heritage. Those seeds of concern germinated, with assistance from one local lady, and Ipoh World was born! There were two objectives and these remain extant today: First, to save, record and make available to the public worldwide, the accurate local history of Ipoh and the Kinta Valley and secondly to establish an Ipoh Heritage Centre.

The first objective has undoubtedly grown into a useful, searchable, database of more than 9000 articles and 14,000 scans available to everybody with a computer or smart phone (<http://db.ipohworld.org/login.php>). This has been used very successfully by University students, both local and overseas, as far away as Tasmania, USA and UK, to enhance their studies. A number of authors and film units have also made good use of the facilities, all free of charge. An interesting growth area has also sprung up from the database which now assists with matters of Genealogy, putting friends and relations together after being separated for many years and even finding the graves of long-lost relatives. All of this through the pages of the database. This is a most rewarding task.

Recently, another offshoot of the database has flourished where ipohWorld's founder has been contracted as an adjunct lecturer to UTP ((Universiti Teknologi Petronas). This in turn has led to other Universities and organisations booking him for lectures as well. This is a great way to share Ipoh's history and heritage to Malaysia's young people.

However the second objective, to establish an Ipoh Heritage Centre, has not borne fruit. It is true that the organization has gathered a large number of artifacts that tell the story of Ipoh from the earliest days as preparation for the centre but, to date, no suitable building has yet been found for these wonderful items require far more space than a single shophouse can provide. This is a major shortcoming as these artifacts need to be seen by the public for both nostalgia, but more importantly, education and tourism.



But let us not forget ipohWorld's Hakka museum, Han Chin Pet Soo. This alone is a major achievement as it is one of only four Hakka museums in the world. Recorded as Ipoh's top attraction, by TripAdvisor, since May 2015 it tells the story of local Tin Mining and how the richest Hakka Chinese towkays spent their leisure hours away from their several wives and concubines. With regular guided tours in several languages, it is the, "not-to-be-missed", visit in Ipoh. You may book a visit at the door or via <http://www.ipohworld.org/reservation/>.

But what about funding? The company has a staff of five full-time plus part-timers as required, an office at 151 Jalan Dato' Lau Pak Khuan and the museum, all of which require hard-earned money to survive. This is where ipohWorld is so fortunate, for although we do accept donations, particularly from visitors to the museum, sponsorship has been provided by Kinta

Properties since 2006. Without that support there would be no ipohWorld! We should all be grateful for their philanthropy.

So to conclude, there is no doubt that ipohWorld, over the last 14 years has been very successful. It has put Ipoh on the world map, while enhancing education opportunities and improving tourist awareness of Ipoh. Nonetheless, more needs to be done and we at ipohWorld plan to do it somehow. Ipoh needs that Heritage Centre as well as many other quality facilities to make our city a better place to live.